



April 13, 2012

In 2011, for the first time in California history, the independent CRC drew State Assembly, Senate, Congressional and Board of Equalization districts. After participating in that historic process, and in the litigation immediately following, we evaluated our experience and concluded there are several common sense improvements that can be made to the statutes governing the Commission and the redistricting process.

This Commission prided itself on its transparency and openness in the redistricting process, and continued that approach in the consideration of proposed amendments to the statutes. The Commission held three public hearings from January through March to solicit input on the amendments and thoughtfully considered and discussed all suggested changes.

Senate Bill (SB) 1096 reflects some of the amendments that were advocated and supported by the Commission.

The foremost critical issue is that of time. Commissioners, interested organizations and the general public all concurred that the original seven-month time frame from the date the full Commission was seated until the adoption of the final maps created unnecessary hurdles. The Commission began on January 1, 2011, with no familiarity with state operations and procedures. During the next seven-and-one-half months, the Commission, set up its offices, hired staff and consultants, created its website, dealt with lengthy and detailed state contracting procedures, held 34 public input hearings across the state and ultimately drew the state's 177 political districts.

Starting the application and selection process for Commissioners four-and-a-half months earlier would give future Commissions more time to hire staff and consultants in an open, public process. The Commission would also be able to conduct public education and outreach. (California Government Code 8252 (a) (1), (g).

SB 1096 requires at least one set of preliminary district maps for public review and comment on or before July 1st in years ending in one. The current Commission had no such requirement, but did produce a preliminary map on June 10, 2011. The requirement to provide at least one preliminary district map will guarantee that the public will have the ability and time to review the maps and respond to the Commission. (California Government Code 8253 (a) (7).)

While SB 1096 does not reflect all of the improvements that the Commission recommended, we do agree that the remaining amendments in this legislation will promote greater transparency and efficiency in the Commission's operations, and should be passed. These amendments can be easily implemented in conjunction with the related policy lessons learned by this Commission. We urge a yes vote on SB 1096.

Chair Lilbert "Gil" Ontai

Vice-Chair Cynthia Dai